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THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GRAECO-ROMAN CULTURE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF APOSTOLIC CHRISTIANITY

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THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GRAECO-ROMAN CULTURE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF APOSTOLIC CHRISTIANITY

Introduction

To analyze the complex of variant forces operating in the Graeco-Roman world in the first Christian century and to assess for each element its relative effect upon the early development of Christianity is an almost impossible task. Yet it is a task, the accomplishment of which is fundamentally essential to an adequate and comprehensive knowledge of historic Christianity. This complex is composed of a multitude of closely related factors; it involves the questions of the nature of Graeco-Roman culture, of the pristine nature of Christianity, and of the sociological and anthropological laws or principles underlying developing cultures.

This problem is essentially social and humane in the broadest sense. It has to do with the ways in which human beings live their lives from day to day making efforts to accomodate themselves to their environments, meeting practical considerations of living, occasionally being forced into a major decision which shapes the entire subsequent course of their lives. At the same time we have the group-forming tendency of human beings to consider. Our problem includes the fact that individuals congregate in groups as a result of certain of their experiences, and that their gathering together enriches the stream of these experiences.

Our problem is as complex as life itself. It almost defies analysis; any arrangement of material, then, will be necessarily artificial. A study of the Christian movement as it was affected by its cultural surroundings entails a rather intimate knowledge of those surroundings and at the same time a more intimate knowledge of Christian development. There must then be discovered the points of interaction. This ought to involve a study of individuals, but sources are limited and those extant deal more with purely religious matters so that one must read very carefully between the lines to discover how "every day life" was lived. Points of interaction there must have been for as Case aptly put it, "in the last analysis their religion is identical with the spiritual attainments of different individuals, or groups of individuals, whose experience, conduct, and thinking have been very effectively influenced by immediate surroundings." [1] Individuals whose religion is vital have integrated that religion with life and their experience in its religious aspect is not out of harmony with the rest of experience. It may be granted that in the early stages of any religious movement its very life depends upon the vital religious experiences of its devotees. Even after the movement begins to crystallize, it continues to develop and all development in social groups is the experience of individuals, or the response of individuals as a group to environmental conditions. It is, therefore, extremely difficult to analyze a culture and then to analyze a movement which in itself is not only a part of that culture but also which, apart from that culture, cannot be understood completely.

1 Case, S.J., Evolution of Early Christianity, p. 2.

The process of analysis involves dissection of dynamic forces and an examination of them as though they were static. To show how Apostolic Christianity was affected in its development by Graeco-Roman culture, we shall summarize the forces that would have an effect upon the religious life of individuals or which might affect the decisions of religious groups. Then we shall define in some detail Christianity as it developed in the first century of its life. Finally we shall undertake to discover the points of interaction between Christianity and its environment.

Elements of the Environment

The day when the mind is conceived as being divided into compartments, among which there is no intercourse, is gone, at least for some. Formerly religion was regarded as being one of the more important of these compartments. For some people it has been and is even now thus. But religion is life itself; especially, vital religion serves as an integrating factor for all the other forces and interests of life. Even a religious man must eat; he must make some adjustment to the economic life of his day. He has some relationship with organized government. He is not impervious to the intellectual life of his age. If a man is a convert to a religious way, he will inevitably experience, albeit in changed light, former religious, social, economic, and political memories.

When Philip of Macedon went to Thebes as a hostage in 368 B.C. the course of world history changed. There he became Hellenized; there he saw the weakness of the Greek city-state; there he became father of a dream of Pan-Hellenism which he and his great son were to bring close to complete realization. At Chaeronea, Philip united by force a hitherto chaotic district of quarreling states. Granicus, Issus, and Arbela decided the fate of the empire of Darius III and the laws of the Medes and Persians were no more. Alexander then undertook the welding of his vast territories into one closely-knit state. He dreamed of a civilization embracing the best in his native Greek culture and the best in the older Oriental culture. The result of his efforts was a superficial combining of the two older cultures. The inert element of the combination was Oriental culture, while the active agent was Greek philosophy. The masses were essentially Oriental and traditional, whereas the ruling classes were either Greek immigrants or natives who readily adopted Hellenism. Political unity was impossible to maintain after the death of Alexander, but there was a basis for a greater degree of economic unity, or at least there was more widespread interchange of commodities. The great Hellenistic political kingdoms formed the nuclei of powerful economic units. Interchange of commodities on a large scale means interchange of ideas. The Hellenistic world was politically chaotic but culturally more or less unified.[1]

Political world in retrospect and aspect

[1] For material in two preceding paragraphs cf. Botsford, Hellenic History, pp. 381-393, 445-473. Breasted, Ancient Times, pp. 425-452. Tarn, Hellenistic Civilization, pp. 1-42.

At about the same time that the Hellenistic states were approaching some mutual settlement, Rome was making a bid for domination in the West. Carthaginian power in both its commercial and military aspects was utterly destroyed and Rome controlled the West. The struggles in the East brought interference from Rome first merely as a protection to her own allies, but once involved, freedom from obligations became almost impossible. The Romanization of the world was underway; and the Hellenization of Rome came inexorably. The Italian capitalist who went overseas after the Punic Wars profited[1] and Roman generals used the East as a training ground in preparation for the fight for supremacy at home. Marius, Sulla, Pompey, Caesar, each extended the sway of military might at the same time trying to play up to the really dominant class in Rome.[2] Marius guessed wrong, Sulla was fortunate. The issues between Pompey and Caesar were not clear. Each was grasping for power.[3] Caesar appealed to the army and won the temporary success only to meet assassination at the hands of his Senatorial victims. Finally, however, Octavius Augustus following the Caesarian lead,[4] identified his

[1] Rostovtzeff, Social & Economic History of Roman Empire, pp.9,17.

[2] "After all Pompey (and the others) were merely the figureheads of this expansionist movement. The real impetus came from the drive of the capitalists at Rome who employed the vote of the impulsive and megaliomaniac populus to gain immediate profits for themselves, and to widen the field of their lucrative activities." Frank, Roman Imperalism, p. 325.

[3] Rostovtzeff, ibid.,p. 28.

[4] Rostovtzeff, ibid. p. 40.

own economic interests with the fortunes of the army-dictatorship and ruled the world; not the same world that Alexander dreamed of three centuries earlier, but a newer world of greater possibilities for development. Without the contribution of Roman force the developing Hellenistic culture would have become Oriental and static. Roman dynamism introduced contradictions, the resolution of which was the salvation of Hellenic influence.

The government with which the first century Christian came into contact as a citizen was a universal government. It was the one government in the civilized world from the Euphrates to the Pillars of Hercules, from the Sahara to the Rhine and Danube. It was an efficiently organized government under the control of a single powerful head who had a powerful army at his command---although the process was well under way when the emperor was to be the creature of the army and popular commanders contended with each other in behalf of and with the aid of their soldiers. This government under Augustus and his successors organized an efficient tax collecting system in the provinces replacing in the Eastern provinces one of the worst devices for wholesale extortion ever used. Taxes were still heavy but they were collected with some degree of justice.[1]

Into the lives of men this great central government did not enter very deeply. They saw soldiers of that government patrolling the danger spots in cities or guarding the highways; they paid homage at the shrine of the imperial cult; they paid taxes

[1] Rostovtzeff, ibid.,p. 49.

to a servant of that government. But they were more intimately affected by the local government. In the case of the proletarian masses this local government was not their own, yet it was, at least, indigenous to their city. Under the aegis of this central government, however, rapid communication was established between all parts of the empire. In matters religious the Roman government was content to tolerate all cults as long as they were not shockingly scandalous and as long as their devotees paid at least a minumum homage to the state rites. The Jews were pecularily favored in an official way but suffered much from the populace. No other religions would have been or were officially tolerated that defied Caesar-worship[1] as did Judaism. Roman law and Roman judicial system were designed primarily for citizens. Non-citizens when at home enjoyed the protection of the local law, when abroad they were subject to Roman jurisdiction but did not have the privileges of citizenship. Later emperors, the Flavians especially, extended citizenship to practically all free-born inhabitants of the Empire.

If the average citizen did not have a profound sense of intimacy with the Roman government, if his life was still largely carried on in relation to the local government, the universalism of Rome did have its effect. Not only did it render the polis a less-than-all in the eyes of

Economic Life

1 "The imperial religion or Caesar-worship cannot, properly speaking, be termed a religion. It was a badge of loyalty..... It was the cosmopolitan form of the national Roman religion. The Caesar-cult was a test of uniformity and an outstanding example of religion being forced to do duty as a political bond of coherence as practised by the Seleucids (cf. below, pg. 22) or by the Tudors of England." Angus, Religious Quests, p. 22.

its natives,[1] but it provided easy avenues of commercial and cultural intercommunication. In the East the Roman government succeeded to the place held by the Hellenistic kings. In Egypt the nationalized production was carried on as well by Roman emperors as by the Ptolemies who inherited it from the Pharaohs.[2] In each case the fundamental design of government was enrichment; for the Hellenistic kings personal gain, for the Romans proconsular, Senatorial or Imperial gain----the Emperor finally winning because of his control of the army. The Hellenistic kings had aided the possessing class in the interests of political stability; the Romans did likewise.

In the Hellenistic states a rather high degree of capitalism was developed. "The accumulation of capital and the introduction of improved methods of trade and industry proceeded more freely and successfully in the East than in the cities of Greece proper. Hence the commercial capitalism of the Greek cities of the fourth century attained even higher development, which brought the Hellenistic states very near to the stage of industrial capitalism that characterizes the economic history of Europe in the nineteenth centuries."[3] Slavery was basic to this system of production. As the Romans gained control of the Hellenistic states the evils

[1] "In the time of Augustus the cities of the Greek East never dreamed of the possibility of regaining the ancient liberty of the city-states. They acquiesced in the fact that their political liberty was gone forever. They were glad to retain their local self-government." Rostovtzeff, ibid., p. 50.

[2] Rostovtzeff, ibid, pp. 54, 55.

[3] Rostovtzeff, ibid. p. 3.

were increased. Roman capitalists were substituted for native capitalists. Absenteeism increased and slavery increased. The basic industry of the world, agriculture, was reduced from the independent venture of free farmers to a system of estates held by absentee landlords worked by coloni or slaves.[1] This condition was more rapid in the West than in the East due to a large number of veterans of Rome's civil wars who were settled on Macedonian and Syrian lands.[2] Concurrently with this tendency in agriculture we find a process of urbanization going on, bringing with it the creation of a city proletariat. This city proletariat created an extremely dangerous problem. Many of them had been free farmers who had been dispossessed by absentee landlords and displaced by slaves. Others were former slaves unable to find occupation. Urban occupation consisted of trade and industry. Industry was owned by absentee capitalists and manned in large measure by slaves.[4] Trade was largely in the hands of Syrians, Greeks, and Jews even in the Italian cities, and many of these were freedmen. "Apart from agriculture, the chief factor in the economic life of the early Roman Empire was certainly commerce." [5]

[1] Rostovtzeff, ibid. pp. 61,63.

[2] Rostovtzeff, ibid. p. 63

[3] Rostovtzeff, ibid.p.90

[4] Rostovtzeff, ibid.p. 516, n.22

[5] Rostovtzeff, ibid.p. 65.

The social effects of an economic system such as has been outlined above closely follow the economic stratifications. "During these (the Civil) wars the differences between the classes had not been wiped out. The senatorial class remained as exclusive as it had before. The knights realized their great importance for the state and regarded those who were not of the same standing and the same means as inferior beings. The same classes existed in the Italian cities. The senatorial aristocracy, members of the municipal councils, some of them Roman knights, formed the upper order. Alongside of them, but inferior to them, was the mass of the well-to-do bourgeoisie, in part not even freeborn men and women. The distinction between the different groups of these higher classes, alike in the city of Rome and in the Italian municipia, was very sharp. The Roman knights who succeeded in breaching the wall that surrounded the senatorial aristocracy were regarded as intruders, as new men. The senators and knights of the capital smiled at the boorishness of the municipal gransignori. The latter in their turn despised the rich freedmen and others. And separated from all stood the lower classes of the freeborn population, the mass of free peasants, free artisans, half-free farmers, and manual workers. Among the lower classes, again, those resident in the city looked with a kind of contempt on the peasants, the pagani or rustici. In the background there was the enormous mass of slaves---- servants, artisans, agricultuists, miners, sailors, and so forth. We are speaking here, not of the provinces, but of the

Social Life

social divisions among the Roman citizens in Italy." [1] This stratification may be extended to include the provinces to some extent. The senatorial class is not so prominent, but the equestrian capitalist is present in considerable numbers. The native freeborn entrepreneur, especially in the East, forms a considerable element of the commercial class.

"In Rome, Italy, and the provinces there grew up along with this freeborn bourgeisie a class of thrifty and energetic men, that of freedmen. Their importance in the life of the Empire cannot be overestimated. In administration they played, along with the imperial slaves, a very important part as assistants and agents of the emperor. The emperors still looked upon themselves as living the life of a Roman magnate, and organized their 'household' (domus) on the same lines as the other Roman nobles, that is to say, with the help of their private slaves and freedmen. But in fact their household, though not identical with the state like that of the Hellenistic monarchs, was at least as important as, and perhaps more important than, the machinery of the state, and thus their slaves and freedmen --- the Caesaris servi and the liberti Augusti --- formed a new aristocracy as rich as the freeborn senatorial, equestrian, and municipal bourgeoisie, and certainly not less influential in the management of state affairs.

"These imperial slaves and freedmen formed, however, but a small part of the slaves and freedmen of the Roman world. The slaves were the backbone of the economic life of the Empire,

[1] Rostovtzeff, ibid. , p. 47.

especially in commerce and industry, where they supplied the labour employed by the owners of the various workshops. Indeed, the owners of these shops themselves were, to a great extent, former slaves who succeeded in receiving or buying their liberty and in acquiring a considerable fortune. The municipal freedmen formed the lower section of the municipal aristocracy or plutocracy, just as the imperial freedmen formed the lower section of the imperial aristocracy. As an influential class they were given a place in municipal society by the institution of magistri and ministri (the last being sometimes even slaves) in various municipal cults and especially by the institution of the Augustales in the cult of the emperors. Their part was to furnish money for the upkeep of the cult. As a reward they received the title of 'Augustalis' and certain privileges in municipal life."[1]

"Slavery was certainly 'a canker' on ancient society. But it was a decreasing canker, and had its compensations. More numerous and not less wretched were the free or semi-free agricultural laborers of the country and the poverty-stricken proletariat of the cities."[2]

Under the benign Pax Romana large fortunes were accumulated by enterprising manipulators. Many moderately large fortunes were collected by diligent merchants. The possessors of wealth were not always men who were acquainted with the luxuries and

[1] Rostovtzeff, ibid., pp. 99-100.

[2] Dickey, "Some Economic and Social Conditions of Asia Minor Affecting the Expansion of Christianity." in Case, Studies in Early Christianity, p. 402.

cultured refinements possible because of wealth and leisure. A bizarre indulgence and crude materialistic preoccupation with pursuits often vulgar and generally anti-social characterized these new possessors of wealth. Standards of excellence were dictated by a new class, a class without traditions and without restraining intelligence. Among the urban proletariat, unemployed to a considerable extent and becoming increasingly unemployable there was created a carving for shows at public expense, a custom inaugurated as a regular thing by Julius Caesar. These shows of the amphitheater in part satisfy a depraved lust and in part create and intensify it.

The proletariat as a class was incapable of social enterprise. They were limited particularly by economic insuffiency but also by a lack of imaginative leadership. When a man of ability is born in a proletarian environment, he is generally doomed to live obscurely and to die unnoticed. He sometimes engages in anti-social action and comes into conflict with the state --- a criminal. He may rise out of his class and become a member of a higher class by participating in a system of exploitation of his former fellows. A position of class leadership is reserved to the few. Slavery keeps the proletarian in a position of dependence upon the state or charity of the economically more prosperous classes. Slavery kept wages down. "For the end of the Republic I think we may safely conclude that the wages found at Delos (3rd. century B.C. unskilled workmen received from 20-30 cents a day) probably still held, and that the ordinary unskilled laborer

might expect about one denarius per day or about 17-20 cents measured simply in gold..... Obviously the ancient free laborer did not rear a large family and send his children to college. Could he live at all? Certainly not as well as the urban slave, for the slave was not only kept fed and clothed up to the point of efficiency in a position to acquire a pecunium, but his family as well."[1] In Rome the emperors took the responsibilty of placating the masses while giving permission to the capitalists to exploit them. Slavery became very common and the lot of both the slave and the proletarian[2] he had displaced as a productive member of society was ugly. This was a large factor in the urbanization of the Roman world, a process encouraged by the political leaders to be sure, but inevitable even if they had opposed it. The problems of an urban society are much more complex than those of a dominantly rural one. The reactions of urban inhabitants to this complex environment are characterized by a significant lack of comprehension of the meaning both of the environment and the reaction. The problem of leadership is far more important in the urban type of society, and at the same time is more difficult of solution because of the limitations of such

[1] Frank, Economic History of Rome, pp. 337 f.

[2] "Slavery was fatal not only to the slave himself but also to his free brother-laborer. It shut off economic redress from intolerable burdens...." Dickey, op. cit., p. 405.

a large proportion of the inhabitants and the lack of a community of interest among the classes which renders the efforts of class leaders of no effect. This was peculiarly true of Rome and the cities of the Roman world at the time of the early Empire.

Not only are social and economic environment important in the development of the religious life of individuals but likewise are the intellectual and religious notions, ideas and practices with which they have contact. In general the better situated classes economically---because of a leisure produced by their more fortunate position---are more curious concerning intellectual matters. It may be only an affectation on the part of many but it is none the less an important fact. The working classes (slaves and free artisans) and unemployed masses are affected only by emotional movements which meet a need or appeal to an intense longing. In the intellectual life of the Graeco-Roman world we find these two phases: Greek philosophy, the work of the few great minds, the affectation of the leisured; and numerous emotional religious movements, obscure in origin, the salve of conscience, the balm of wounds.

Intellectual and religious life

If the intellectual life of the Graeco-Roman world can roughly be divided into these two phases each of these phases must be broken into constituent elements in order that we may comprehend it at all adequately. In the field of philosophy

Socrates discovered conscience and diverted human thought from a consideration of the physical world to a consideration of man himself. Plato made Goodness the center of the Universe, its cause and goal. The Platonic tradition in the first Christian century was characterized by its rationalism and mysticism. On the other hand Aristotle became an authority, " the master of them that know." His influence was in behalf of codification, reducing to specific content.[1]

Out of the influence of this movement toward ethics came two well defined ethical movements, Epicureanism and Stoicism. Of these the more effective was the latter. Stoicism was the outstanding contribution of the non-Christian Graeco-Roman world to moral living. The greatest souls of the time were most of them products of Stoic teaching. Stoicism preached a new universalism, in which all souls are the off-spring of divine fire and therefore akin to each other in a divine relationship. In the life of its time, Stoicism carried a message of courage in adversity, charity in social life, nobility in power, self-respect in slavery. Stoicism was a gospel for the masses; a popular doctrine taken from the schools by street-preachers.

From the contributions of the Greek philosopher to the intellectual and religious life we pass to the other phase and its elements. If philosophy is essentially logical, religion is essentially emotional. The various forms of religion purported to give to man a sense of security and comfort or

[1] Angus, <u>ibid,</u> ch. IV.

satisfaction in a world in which the facts of experience denied these to him. In essence all religion has this element in it, but religions may be reasonable appeals to faith or unreasonable. The religions of the Graeco-Roman world were of the following types: (1) "The political religion of the imperial cult and the State religions of Greece and Rome, the latter of which had lost their vitality and were maintained as merely venerable institutions of the past....." (2) The ritualistic-sacramental religions, represented chiefly by the Mystery-Religions and by later Christianity. (3) Religions of divine revelation, Gnosis, and sacrament --- the Gnostic type. (4) Religions of Gnosis without sacramental practises, chiefly the Hermetic brother-hoods of Greek theosophy. (5) The individual-ethical type of which the best representative is Stoicism. (6) Social-ethical type, chiefly Judaism and primitive Christianity. (7) The ethical-mystical type, found chiefly in Neo-Platonism, Neo-Pythagoreanism, and in some of the latest phases of Stoicism, as also in such a phase of Christianity as became articulate in Dionysius the Areopagite. (8) Astralism, or the religion of astrology, which was less distinctive but penetrated all other religions and philosophies."[1]

That ancient world sought, as has been suggested above, salvation or security. Salvation was conceived in many differing senses. The desire for security took many forms, security, materially and physically, and security, mentally and spiritually. (1) Political and social salvation was desired. This

[1] Angus, ibid, pp. 22, 23.

type of salvation must give security of life and property, A great man was hailed as a god. The Imperial-cult met few rationalistic obstacles. (2) Another way to salvation was through self-realization and self-reliance, as in Stoicism of the Roman type. (3) "Religion of the unio mystica, which manifests much the same characteristics in every age and culture, and which was then represented chiefly by the mystical Christianity of Paul and the Fourth Gospel; the Platonism of Philo and Plotinus and in the speculative asceticism of revived Pythagoreanism."[1] (4) Some escape from cosmic necessity was essential, The universe was, in its outward aspects, unfriendly and an individual must have some basis for hope. Schemes of salvation provided burden-bearers for these cosmic loads. (5) Union with deity was achieved by rite and sacrament.[2] Religious yearnings seek release from the weight of the world and release from self. Another type of salvation sought deliverance from sin.[3]

The final phase of Graeco-Roman life which we shall consider is the recreational and moral. The three most prominent forms of recreation were the theatre, the games, and the amphitheater. Each of these forms of amusement was secondary,a few

[1] Angus, ibid , p. 31.

[2] Cf. Angus, ibid , p. 42, and ch. V.

[3] Classification of soteria from Angus, ibid , ch. II

participating, many witnessing. The ancient Greek classic drama was no longer popular. Instead a coarse and vulgar comedy was the most common type of dramatic production. The games, by far the most wholesome factor of this entertainment had largely fallen under the cloud of professionalism and were no longer the spontaneous expression of Greek joy in bodily health and physical vigor. The amphitheater was by far the most brutalized and brutalizing of popular amusements. It aroused then satisfied the blood lust of mobs no longer given even that pseudo-satisfaction of serving in armies on the battle-field. The following estimate is placed upon the amphitheater: "This debased stage was not sufficiently immoral and realistic for the Romans. Their crass nature found an outlet in the spectacles of the amphitheater --- the most shocking form in which any race has ever found amusement. Every excess of cruelty and novelty was tried."[1] And again: "The evil influence contaminated all existence. It unfitted men for the pursuits of peaceful life, encouraged cruel passions, created a demand for excitement, destroyed the idealistic by fostering extreme realism, exterminated all sense of disgust, rendered society callous to the misery and discomforts of their fellows, and so hindered the embryonic sense of brotherhood and humanity."[2]

Recreational and moral life

[1] Angus , Environment of Early Christianity, p. 42.

[2] Angus, ibid , p. 44.

Of the more primary sources of recreation we have some records. Perhaps eating and gossiping[1] were the most popular and common. What the urban worker of ordinary means did is by no means well known. There were at any rate a large number of fraternal organizations, collegia , which embraced many in various strata of society. Some of these were merely burial societies, while others existed as fire companies. They were secret and formed somewhat of a problem for the government, for we find Trajan issuing an edict against the formation of a fire company lest it deal in sedition.

Family life was characterized on the one hand by a low regard for women, impermanence of the marriage tie to a marked degree, distaste of the inconvenience of children leading to abortion and exposure or some other form of infanticide; on the other hand we find women held in a higher regard in many quarters, protests against sexual laxness and divorce, and an increasing love for children. Stoic and Jewish morality undoubtedly contributed much in these lines.

Into this type of world the Christian movement was born and lived. If a summary of its complex characteristics were to be made, it would emphasize first of all its universal

Summary

elements: language, government, and common intellectual patterns. Secondly it would emphasize the instrument which was so instrumental in making this degree of unity possible, facility of transportation

[1] "Gossiping" includes all forms of conversation that accompany a dinner or convivium. cf. Cicero, De Senectute.

and communication, the best known in the world on so large a scale until the nineteenth century A.D.[1] Thirdly it would emphasize the amazing variety in the elements of that world; economic activity and commercial enterprise, social stratifications and classifications, behavior patterns, and intellectual pursuits and attainments. Christianity partook of the influence of this ethos when it came into contact with the central stream of contemporary culture.

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The Christian Movement

Any social movement is a thought system operating upon and through certain individuals in a given environment. A dominant idea or integrating principle of life born of an individual's reaction to and upon a social situation in the light of all other intellectual and social factors is transmitted to other individuals who in turn modify it according to their individual interests and reactions to a peculiar environment. The idea, if important, forms a significant item in behaviour, thus furthur complicating the

[1] "Transport, assuming added significance with the increased size of states, perplexed statesmen even more that it did merchants and manufacturers; and with good reason. For without effective communications big states were bound to be weak states." Ferguson, "Leading Ideas in the New Period", Cambridge Ancient History, v. VIII, p. 3.

given environment. In some proportion to the accuracy with which the originator of the idea apprehends his situation, the idea will appeal to others. At times emotional elements more powerful than accuracy or intrinsic worth are engrafted onto the originally simple idea, thereby reducing its essential accuracy and making a more popular appeal. History records many instances of driving and compelling illusions.

Palestinian Judaism was in its essence little affected by Hellenistic culture, the efforts of Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) of the House of Seleucus to the contrary, notwithstanding. Some Jews adopted a veneer of Hellenistic culture; Hellenizers, they were called. There was a party of the Jews, the Sadducees, which was not hostile to Hellenistic culture; they were loyal to the Judaism of the Torah but not to that of the Talmudic traditions. Pharisaic Judaism, that which insisted on loyalty to the whole body of priestly traditions was culturally exclusive and quite powerful among a large proportion of the Jews around Jerusalem and in Galilee. At least these dictricts were filled with "one-hundred-percenters."[1]

Jesus, a Palestinian Jew of Nazareth in Galilee, an attendant on Temple and synagogue[2], a devout student of the literary life of his people,[3] impressed his own individuality upon these elements. In his mind there was an idea born of

[1] Cf. Simkhovitch, Toward the Understanding of Jesus. ch. II Also Acts 5: 37.

[2] Mark 1:21, Luke 2: 46. Luke 19:45 f. Matthew 4:23; 9: 35.

[3] Matthew 5:21, 27, 33, 38, 43; 15: 7-9.

contact with these traditions. The idea was an apprehension of the conflict between the traditions of his people in their essential spirit and the social situation of his time; an apprehension of the true nature of God and his purpose for Israel. This

Jesus

idea dominates his significant behavior and he is brought into conflict with the vested interests which would suffer diminution of influence in an application of the idea. Jesus' idea is that the Kingdom of God will come by devotion to two principles: love to God and love to man.[1] He appreciated the character of God and because of personal experience of relationship to God, he is enabled to pursue his course with unflinching purpose. He suffers because he realizes that God works through suffering, that the moral order of the universe is built on the principle of suffering and love. His formula for the social situation of his time is a suffering love. The vested interests are reliant on force and would lose much of their peculiar power if love dominated social relationships.

After his death, disciples of Jesus, captivated by the winsomeness of his personality and apprehending in some degree (when the first shock of disappointment is over) the essential truth of Jesus' principles, begin to proclaim the power they have

The disciples

found. They see in Jesus the "Messiah of the Kingdom", the

[1] Mark 12:29-31. A more detailed account of Jesus' teachings will be given below, pp. 27-31

"stem of the rod of Jesse". This appeals to some Jews, to others it does not. The content of the idea undergoes modifications. The disciples do not quite grasp the full import of Jesus' idea; in addition his death has a profound influence upon their thought of him. Gradually they transfer their major thought from his idea to him.[1] At first he is thought of as the Messiah, the agent of the Kingdom; at the same time his religious life and access to God are remembered by the disciples who feel that he has opened up God to them.

At this juncture (c. 35 A.D.) a significant event takes place. Up to this time the leaders in propagating the Jesus-cult among the Jews are the original disciples. They had made some progress. However, at this time, a young Jew of Tarsus, an ardent fellow, had a significant experience while engaged in persecuting these followers of the Way and is convinced of a truth connected with this Jesus-cult. He is extremely religious, having been a very strict Jew[2] and harsh persecutor of blasphemers[3] and it suddenly dawns upon him during this experience that in Jesus there is a way to God. He immediately takes up the task of travelling throughout the whole Eastern world approaching first Jews then Gentiles with his message. His

Paul

[1] Cf. Matt., 10: 5-42 with Acts 3: 19-20.

[2] Phil. 3; 4-6.

[3] Acts 9: 1-2 ; Phil. 3: 6.

message differs even more from the original idea of Jesus that did that of the disciples. He brings to his experience a life spent in an environment, in most respects totally different from theirs. The idea, therefore, makes a different impression upon a mind with this environmental background. He spreads the idea and organizes those who adopt it into groups. These groups have some fellowship with those in other parts, especially with the original nucleus at Jerusalem. He writes letters to them in which he sets forth still further his ideas and message.

The Church

The movement had by this time attracted a sufficient number of followers to be more or less significant. Homogeneity, possible in a small clique, became increasingly difficult and the wide area covered by the movement made it hard to maintain agreement as to essential facts. The environmental background of each mind which accepted this "idea" has a modifying influence upon it and it was not long before the "idea" had become somewhat distorted. The written word of authority then began to insure orthodoxy.

The Gentile Mission

The man of whom we spoke, Paul of Tarsus, was by no means the only participant in the Gentile mission of the Jesus-cult or "Christianity". There were others, some known, many obscure, and their participation, of course, meant other modifying elements. Paul, however, was perhaps the most prominent and it was his literary output that comprised nearly half the canonical

Christian writings; he was the largest single contributor to the New Testament. Through his influence and the influence of those who followed him in the Gentile field the doctrinal complexion of "Christianity" was modified so that the original simple traditions of the Jesus-cult, a revivified Judaism, became of cosmic world view of universal import by the adoption and adaptation of several foreign conceptions. The Judaic Jesus-cult became Hellenistic Christianity.

What the environmental elements were which affected Christianity, and how it was affected by these elements we must now consider. By far the most marked effect was in its intellectual content. Its organizational development was more or less natural and quite subordinate in importance. The practical religious activities of the members of the movement were dictated largely by the dominating intellectual concept. The intellectual content of Christianity was affected not only by the specifically intellectual (philosophic and religious) features of its environment but also by the social, economic, political, and recreational features. It was essentially a practical movement, meeting the needs of a specific environment.

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What is Christianity? Is Christianity a system of thought, a religious movement, a Church, or what? If it is a system of thought is its content constant? Is it Jesus' thought, the Disciples' thought, Paul's thought, Origen's thought, Augustine's thought, Luther's thought, or my thought? You might say it is all of them. But they are not consistent. Christianity is more than a system of thought. Briefly we shall posit the following: it is that historic movement growing out of the contact of certain persons with one, Jesus, into a corporate body known historically as the Christian Church which attempted to give social expression to its conception of the thought of Jesus; it has continued since that time to perform that function in the time and the place in which it found itself; its vast comprehensiveness led to schisms on the lines of differences of opinion as to the proper conception and its proper expression.

Christianity in the Graeco-Roman world.

What is Christianity?

We have surveyed the Graeco-Roman environment, We have briefly reviewed the early Christian movement. We shall now devote ourselves to this proposition: how the body "known historically as the Christian Church" grew out of "contact with Jesus" into what it became.

Let us, first of all, consider the work of Jesus. Any consideration of Christianity must take Jesus as its starting point. Jesus' teachings and aims must be clearly under-

stood and realized in order that we may appreciate the significance of what followed. There is a considerable amount of difference of opinion among the authorities as to just the meaning of Jesus' work, as to his aims and accomplishments. A great deal of this difference is in the matter of emphasis merely; but the question of emphasis is a crucial one, for it governs to a considerable extent one's interpretation of subsequent developments in the movement. Most writers seem to be occupied with the religious character of Jesus' work, to the total neglect of the actual historical setting and practical implications of his teachings and life.[1]

Jesus' Idea

[1] Cf. Rall, "Teachings of Jesus", Abington Bible Commentary, pp. 904-913. "He believed that a new day was at hand, that a new world was waiting for men, and that men were to live a new life with God and their fellows." "Salvation with Jesus was a very simple and personal matter. The lost man was the man out of place, out of right relations.....He was in wrong relations with his world, with men, and with God. But the relation with God was fundamental; make that right and the rest would be right. To that end a man had first to see differently and feel differently; he had to come to himself, to repent (Lk.15:17) Repentance was more than feeling; it was a total change of mind and will. And there must be faith, the faith which trusted God and turned with heart and will toward him." The whole article is characterized by this essential grasping of Jesus' message but lack of historic definiteness.

Cf. also Scott, The Gospel and Its Tributaries, pp. 66-73. Scott summarizes Jesus' work in five aspects: (1) God is Father whose will is one of love; (2) his conception of God as Father involved a new conception of our relation to him, from one of fear and calculation to one of love and free obedience; (3) Jesus taught the absolute value of the individual soul; (4) the spiritual are supreme, he taught; (5) he provided the life of man with a center -- and inner spring and formative principle. All these points are true; but why did Jesus teach thus?

However, did not the historical circumstances in which Jesus lived provide the point of his gospel? "In the year 70, the national tragedy was consummated. The temple was burned and Jerusalem destroyed; its inhabitants were delivered unto the sword, crucified, sold into slavery and scattered to the four corners of the earth. So long protratced was the tragedy that Jesus' whole life and ministry occurred in the midst of it .... But even a superficial glance at Jesus' life shows us the imminence of the disaster, and how concretely Jesus' life was bound up with the political destiny of Judea .... Did the battle-cry of Judas (the Gaulonite), 'No tribute to the Romans', ever die out in Jesus' lifetime?"[1] This author goes on to develop the idea that it was the Jews' desire to free themselves from Rome that occupied Jesus. He, as a Jew of spirit, resented Roman domination. Through an inner moral struggle he arrived at a solution of the problem. He rejected the Zealot program of violent rebellion. He likewise rejected the expediency of the Pharisses who knew that they were too weak to resist the Roman but who cherished in their hearts a "perfect hatred". His was a religious program, "The Kingdom of God is within you"; "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, and thy neighbor as thyself"; "Thou shalt <u>love</u> thine enemies." The patriots did him to death because he advocated love to enemies. They accused him to Pilate as a rebel but Pilate "found no fault in him" and offered to release him at the

[1] Simkhovitch, <u>Toward the Understanding of Jesus</u>, p. 37.

Passover, but the patriots called for the release of Barabbas, a convicted rebel.[1] Pilate, to prevent a riot, obeyed Jesus' enemies.[2]

If this view is accurate, and there is much plausibility in it, Jesus is the author of a practical political philosophy of universal validity. It is often supposed that a program for political action is essentially mundane and non-religious. This is not necessarily the case, for great world-views look at all experience sub specie aeternitatis. Surely a great world-view takes into consideration practical, real matters; politics, national salvation, national destiny are real; they are vital and important. For Jesus the popular ideas and solutions of these problems are false. "What will it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Jesus reads the sign of the times and in the light of his experience he sees the falsity of the popular notions. His view is eternal, universal, practical, if you will. He is motivated by personal acquaintance with God and apprehends the deep reaches of the moral law. Life is not something to be endured with Stoic calm because it is the will of the universe. Jesus' religion is not a balm for woes only, a healing salve that makes life endurable without removing the cause of diseases and stopping the source of wounds. It is not an opiate which deadens the sense of pain or the sense of sin. Pain

[1] Mark 15: 7.

[2] Simkhovitch, ibid ., Ch. V

and sin are seen in their stark reality and the cure is a major surgical operation, a ruthless excision. Not only is Jesus' method different from the popular methods, but his idea of the kingdom is different from popular notions of it. His was a Kingdom of God which involved complete surrender to its aims and to its methods. His was a call to the Jews to repent. He called his people to an eternal task, to teach the world the way of the Kingdom of God, for it was at hand. In doing this he used at times the familiar phrases of Jewish apocalypticism, but I feel that we are safe in thinking of this as a literary device of his, for the whole spirit of his teaching does not warrant a literal interpretation. Even though he did take advantage of popular hopes by using a current vocabulary with injected new meaning in order to gain a hearing, it was his essential purpose to transcend the popular idea and show God's purpose as he apprehended it in his life of intimate contact. Jesus' plan for the social salvation of Israel was one which penetrated to the heart of the moral order of the universe and is of universal validity.

The death of Jesus was a great shock to the disciples. For a time after the crucifixion there was probably a great emptiness in their lives. How much of common action there was among them we have no way of knowing.

The disciples' Idea

Common sympathy probably bound most of them together. Possibly it was out of these common gatherings that the concept of Jesus' immortality arose, or possibly it

was first recounted by one or two and a reiteration of the idea with constant thinking upon him burned the concept into the minds of the survivors. The impress of his personality undoubtedly was great enough to give force for some time after death. At any rate, however the concept arose, it did arise and soon the disciples began proclaiming it abroad. They immediately met opposition from the elements responsible for Jesus' death. At the same time the very idea was shocking to the religiously strict and respectable, the thinkers of the congregation. Peter's eloquence in describing the work of a person for whom he had unbounded admiration and reverence attracted the more emotional members of the Jerusalem populace, as well as Greek-speaking Jews of the Diaspora and possibly Greeks who were partially converted to Judaism, "God-fearers". "Meantime the Lord added the saved daily to their number."[1] What did Luke, a Greek writer, mean by the term σωζόμενος? This term came to mean "saved from death by Christ". How? Was this element in the preaching of Jesus? Yes, in a sense. Jesus spoke as though living as a candidate for Kingdom citizenship were equivalent to some sort of salvation.[2] The Gospel according to St. John, however, treats this concept of the Kingdom of God as "eternal life". In the early church at Jerusalem a great deal of consideration was given to practical daily

[1] Acts 2: 47 according to Moffatt.

[2] Matt. 7: 21-23.

living.[1] They took care of their poor, they held things in common, they finally developed an organization for helping their needy ones.

How far this idea was from the conception of Jesus it is impossible to say. That the disciples had little of the prophetic genius of Jesus is manifest. At the same time our sources may be inadequate. They come from a period much later than the events which they record. By the time they were written, Jerusalem had been destroyed, the Church had become definitely Gentile, and it is very possible that the character of the Christian message had undergone transformation (but that is what we are trying to prove) so that we do not receive a complete impression of the spirit of the Apostolic Church in its earliest beginnings. The early chapters of Acts do not record the disciples as teaching the message that Jesus taught. They teach rather that Jesus has risen from the dead and will come soon to establish a kingdom in Israel. People are asked to repent so that may become part of it in an exclusive sense, that they might be "saved". Jesus' conception of the Kingdom as outlined above seems to be absent in their teaching. Whether there was the esoteric note in the disciples' concept is not clear, but we have a hint in the decision on the Sanhedrin,[2] to prevent them from telling anyone "about this Name". The disciples may have had the notion that Jesus' preaching was merely on Interimsethik but it is very doubtful that Jesus

[1] Acts 2: 44-47; 4: 32-5; 11: 6; 1-6.

[2] Acts 4: 15-17.

had that idea. It is only natural that this should be true for even during the life of Jesus the disciples reveal at times an enormous gulf between their thought and his. It is not to be supposed that after his death they should have suddenly been endowed with power to see life exactly, as Jesus saw it. They received an inspiration from contact with him and with fine devotion to their ideal, they taught as they had experienced. Their experience included some apprehension of Jesus' message and the stamp of the eternal impression of his matchless life and supreme personality. The driving force of his personality had been the central factor in the subsequent Christian movement.

The disciples were still Jews. They regarded themselves as the true Israel which had accepted the Messiah when he came. The authorities, the Sanhedrin, the priests and scribes were a "stiff-necked race because they resisted the Holy Spirit."[1] The movement so far had been entirely within Judaism. "It is noticeable, in the first place, that Jesus seems never to have visited the coast region of Palestine where, as at Joppa and Jamnia, doubtless also at Ptolemais, there was at least a considerable Jewish population; that he never preached in Tiberius or Taricheae, which were probably the largest towns on the Lake of Galilee, or at Scythopolis just south of the Lake, or in any of the towns on its eastern side, though he visited Bethsaida Julias, or

[1] Acts 8: 51.

at Seleucia on Lake Merom, or in Sepphoris, the largest city in Galilee, not far from Nazareth, That no one of these cities is mentioned in the story of Jesus' career is an indication -- by no means proof -- that they were largely non-Jewish." [1] And some situation holds true in the early church. When Saul was given authority to go to Damascus and bring bound to Jerusalem men and women of the Way.[2] it was still a Jewish movement. The Christian movement remained a Messianic sect of the Jews, adhering to the necessities of the Jewish law, looking for the not distant coming ofthe Lord to establish his Reign forever in accordance with the promises of the Scripture, until after the conversion of one of the noted leaders of the Judaic prosecutors, Saul of Tarsus, although it came into intimate contact with the Hellenistic world through the conversion of Greek-speaking Jews of the Diaspora. "Whether we go back to the time of Caesar or the Syrian kings or the Ptolemies, we find that the Jews who lived abroad, with rare exceptions, remained true to their religion.....Instead of being absorbed by the pagan religions, they maintained in the Hellenistic period a most zealous and successful propaganda (Matt. 23:15)..... In Damascus, shortly before the last war with Rome, there were multitudes of Gentiles, especially of women, who were attached to Judaism....In the

[1] Gilbert, Greek Thought in the New Testament, p. 20.

[2] Acts 9: 2.

synagogues of the Diaspora, wherever Paul preached, there was a Gentile element." [1] Acts 5 records numerous additions to the original group at Jerusalem and chapter 6 points out the adjustments in organization taken to meet the situation. In Acts 6:1 there is a reference to "Hellenists" who complained against the others. These were Greek-speaking Jews, not natives of Palestine, but Jews nevertheless.

Saul was born a Jew, reared a Pharisee, trained at Jerusalem, a keeper of the law. He was zealously religious, earnestly seeking that which religion ought to give. He vigorously prosecuted Christians as blasphemers. He

Paul

was, however, born and brought up in the Greek city of Tarsus. His father was probably a man of some means, being a Roman citizen at the time when the acquisition of that privelege was rare. How much Greek training the boy Saul had we do not know. His literary output was written in idiomatic koinè Greek of some quality; differing from the rhetorical efforts of Greek teachers of the time, however, it was direct, sincere, and forcible. It was inevitable that he should be affected by current thought concepts in religious and philosophical matters, although he betrays no very intimate knowledge of Greek learning in his own writings, quoting a Stoic poet but once, on the evidence of Luke.[2]

Paul's mission was to the Gentile world. Immediately after

[1] Gilbert, ibid , p. 26.

[2] Acts 17: 24-28.

his conversion he went to Arabia for three years, then he stayed at Jerusalem with Peter, the Lord's brother, and others of the saints for about a fortnight.[1] He did no work at Jerusalem but set out subsequently for some of the cities of Asia Minor where he carried the news of the gospel. In each case he went to the synagogue. In the Diaspora, each synagogue was composed of a nucleus of Jews and Greek converts with a periphery of interested Greeks who had not accepted the full Jewish requirements. It was usually among the last two elements that he made his greatest appeal. In practically every case he became a persona non grata with the Jews; at times he was cast out forcibly and once he escaped death luckily. To each of these groups were added Gentiles who had but little knowledge of or sympathy with Judaism. At this point Paul comes into conflict with the mother church at Jerusalem[2] which insists upon full acceptance of Jewish rites and practises before a proselyte can be eligible for the Christian community. In this struggle Paul does his greatest service to Christianity. He guarantees its universality by breaking the shell of Judaism; otherwise Christianity would have remained a Jewish sect, bound by Jewish legalism with which Jesus himself came into conflict. The essential spirit of Jesus' message was transcendent to the rites of Judaism where they interfered with the progress of the Kingdom. Paul here grasps the essential genius of Christianity, its universality.

[1] Galatians 1: 16-19, cf. however, Acts, 9: 26-29.

[2] Acts 15: 1-30, Gal. 2: 1-21.

But he does not reproduce Jesus' idea. He brings to the disciples' idea of a crucified Messiah, who is returning and who has already by the impress of his personality brought redemption, a Hellenistic background. The disciples were Galilean peasants; Paul was a Jew of the Diaspora albeit he was educated in Jewish schools in Jerusalem. His early contacts in all probabliity had some determining effect upon his later ideas.[1] In addition to that he himself is somewhat of a religious genius. His own strong personality will contribute to any religious idea. The Jesus-cult of the disciples is recharged by impact with a powerful personality. The Gentile mission already begun on an extensive basis by this remarkable interpretor.

It is in the development of this Gentile mission that we find the growth of Christianity from what it was in 35 A.D. in Jerusalem to what it became in the Greek world in 100 A.D. "Our records, though invaluable, are very fragmentary, acquainting us mainly with certain chapters in the career of <u>one</u> man who labored out-

[1] "Let all proper allowance be made for the exclusiveness of the Jewish rabbi of the time, springing from his pride in God's unique revelation to Israel and from his contempt for idolatry, it is, nevertheless, well-nigh impossible that a Jew of Tarsus, who by his Tarsian residence had been engrafted, as it were, into the Hellenic stock and who was endowed with extraordinary intellectual ability and no less extraordinary emotional nature, should have been unimpressed by the great thinkers of Greece, especially as these thinkers from Anaxagoras and Socrates down to his own day had been largely occupied with religious questions, and that he should have been unimpressed also by the intense and dramatic religious life all about him." Gilbert, <u>ibid</u>. , p. 62.

side Palestine, and he not a member of the original Apostolic band, While Paul was proclaiming the good news in fifteen and more cities from Damascus to Corinth, someone preached in Rome and founded there a flourishing Christian community, nor can we doubt that in Cyrene and Alexandria and in a score of less famous cities about the Mediterraneanm and in Seleucia on the Tigris other unknown evangelists planted the seed of the kingdom. Now in all this wide domain, woth only a partial exception in the case of the Italian cities, the environment of the Apostolic Church, particularly the intellectual and spiritual environment, was predominantly Greek."[1] We have discussed in some detail the main features of this Graeco-Roman environment. By way of summary: language, universal, both in the civilized world and in the Christian Church; art, architecture, sculpture, painting; social life, games and combats, theater; philosophy and religion, Stoicism and Epicureanism, ethics, Mystery-Religions, Emperor-worship.

To what extent Paul was influenced by his Greek environment, it is impossible to state accurately. There are some points in Paul's preaching which bear strong resemblances to elements in his contemporary Graeco-Roman environment, however. Paul has often been spoken of as a corrupter of Christianity. There has generally been a strong element of reproach in these accusations. On the other hand there have been many who are staunch

[1] Gilbert, ibid. , p. 40.

in defense of the Tarsian. There were certain accretions from Graeco-Roman sources that were valuable, at the same time other additions to Christianity from those sources were distinctly harmful. Paul and the other apostles ought not to be censured for changes which occurred in the details of the Message of Christianity. They may have been responsible but the tendency to change is to be expected in the developmental history of any idea after it has been communicated to others.

The central feature of Paul's gospel was his idea of Christ. Paul's idea of Jesus, of course, was based not upon personal acquaintance after the flesh but upon an acquaintance with Jesus' followers after his death. His information was wholly secondary ~~as~~ so far as we know. Paul was a mystic and knew Christ in a mystical way; his experience on the road to Damascus was a mystical experience. In his preaching he laid stress upon the knowledge of Christ arrived at through faith. His preaching was essentially a faith-mysticism. This faith-mysticism involved in it concepts of the person of Jesus which were not in Jesus' own thought of himself. "The <u>character</u> of Jesus, in the apostle's thought, is divine love, and to that extent he is of course in full accord with the story in the Gospels, but when we hear him speak of the nature of Christ, his relation to the universe and to God, and his work of redemption, we are no longer in Galilee with Jesus, but in a realm of thought altogether

foreign to his."[1] A number of passages[2] from Paul's letters can be cited which set forth an idea of Jesus which cannot be explained in terms of Jesus' teaching, nor in terms of any Jewish doctrines. Paul may not necessarily have been conscious of borrowing; these statements in his writings bear the stamp of sincerity of religious adoration, but there are analogies in his environment which force us to recognize the fact that Paul was the creature of that environment to the extent that he thought in its terms and interpreted his experience and his knowledge in those terms. "Now the question of the precise source whence these conceptions came is far less important than the recognition of the fact that they did not come from Jesus and his gospel. But as the matter stands to-day, we are not without very clear trace of their origin. Their kinship is with Greek

[1] Gilbert, ibid. , p. 66.

[2] Coll. 1:17. "...He is prior to all, and all coheres in him." Phil. 2:6. "Though he was divine by nature, he did not set store upon equality with God." Coll. 2:15 "..... when he cut away the angelic Rulers and Powers from us, exposing them to all the world and triumphing over them in the cross." Phil. 3: 21. "... the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body that belongs to our low estate till it resembles the body of his Glory, by the same power that enables him to make everything subject to himself." Compare these with 1 Tim. 1: 1; 2: 3. Tit. 1: 3,4; 2: 10; 3: 4,6. 2 Tim. 4:10. Rom. 8:3. "For God has done what the Law, weakened here by the flesh could not do; by sending his own son in the guise of sinful flesh, to deal with sin." The relationship between Christ and the Spirit is shown in the following; 1 Thess. 1:10; 4:17. "...to serve a living God and to wait for the coming of his Son from heaven...." and "... then we the living, who survive, will be caught up along with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall be with the Lord forever."

philosophy in its Alexandrian form."[1] "This feature of Paul's thought is best explained in connection with the Logos-doctrine. It is foreign to the Gospel of Jesus and to the Old Testament. But in the Greek speculation the Logos was impersonal except in Philo, and even in his writings the thought of personality is vague." [2]

Again Paul's thought of the Church as the "Body" and "bride" of Christ does not have its counterpart in Hebrew thought nor in the teachings of Jesus. As for example, 1 Cor. 12: 27. "Now you are the Body of Christ and severally members of it." And, Eph. 4: 12, "....for the upbuilding of the Body of Christ..." Or Eph. 5: 25-27, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her to consecrate her by cleansing her in the bath of baptism as she utters her confession, in order to have the church as his very own, standing before him in all her glory, with never a spot or wrinkle or any such flaw, but consecrated and unblemished." "These relationships, which are 'not capable of being clearly defined', are obviously strange to the thought of Jesus about himself and his relation to his followers as contained in the Synoptic Gospels. We know that he did not found a Church and that there is no intimation that he expected his disciples to establish a new religious institution.

[1] Gilbert, ibid., p. 67.

[2] Gilbert, ibid., p. 70.

Of his relation to followers and of their relation to him he says nothing that takes us beyond the simple clear loyalties of Master and disciples, nothing that is mystical and undefinable for the common mind. Paul's thought of the heavenly side of the Church, however far it may be his own creation, is more intelligible in association with his views of the nature of Christ than in any other realm."

In regard to the relation of Jesus to the redemption process Paul seems to come closer to Greek analogies than to anything in Hebrew thought, Not that he consciously patterned his ideas upon those of his contemporaries; but he goes beyond the warrant in Jesus' teaching and also that of Jewish ideas. "The nucleus of the popular cults, as the cults of Attis, Osiris and Adonis, is this: A divine being comes to earth, assumes human form, dies a violent death, rises, and through union with him, variously brought about men are redeemed. And what does Paul teach? A being who existed in the form of God appeared on earth in the likeness of sinful flesh, was crucified, and rose from the dead. Men, through their relation to this experience of a celectial being, are redeemed." "He does not appeal to the Gospel of Jesus in its support, and it is manifest that he could not do so...."[1] In recognizing Greek elements in Paul's thought, it does not mean

1 Gilbert, ibid., pp. 70-71.

that that thought is religiously invalid. It means, rather, that his thought contained Greek elements and was not entirely Christian in the sense that Jesus' thought was Christian. It likewise does not mean that Christianity by the accretions of Greek thought becomes simply another Greek religion. Christianity contains in it unique elements of great value which do not vanish at the first contacts with foreign ideas. Foreign ideas have a modifying effect.

The most mooted point of all in Paul's influence upon Christianity is his attitude toward the sacraments. Was Paul a sacramentalist? The scholarly opinion is almost hopelessly divided upon this issue, but the consensus of authority seems to point to the conclusion that Paul was not himself a sacramentalist but that he laid the foundations, or at least countenanced the laying of foundations, that made the Church completely sacramentalist by the end of the first century. Whether we may place the blame at the feet of Paul or not, we may safely say that the Church had by 100 A.D. become engulfed in sacramentalism, and that this sacramentalism is of Greek origin and is not based upon any commands of Jesus,[1] and does not have warrants in Jewish backgrounds. Jesus' only test for entrance into the Kingdom was a spiritual test.

[1] "As to Baptism, we regard it as historically certain that Jesus neither baptized nor gave his disciples directions to establish the rite." Gilbert, ibid., p. 74.

Paul's thought in regard to both baptism and the Lord's Supper is more or less confused. At times he speaks about the former as though it were of intrinsic worth, as though it were ex opere operato. At times, however, his attitude is one approaching indifference (1 Cor.1:15-17).
He sanctioned baptism for the dead, a clear act of magic and attachment to the rite of more than symbolic importance."Vicarious baptism was an Orphic practise."[1] In Rom. 6: 3 he associates baptism with the death of Christ, and in Gal. 3: 27 he regards it as "putting on" Christ. In 1 Cor. 12: 13 he describes it as a means of imparting the Spirit. His description of baptism is analogous to the description of initiation in the pagan cults. "Initiation, which guarantees regeneration, is also conceived as a dying, or as participation in the death and resurrection of a Mystery-Saviour. That Paul should use such conceptions in connection with baptism does not, however, prove that baptism was viewed by him as identical with the rites in Paganism."[2] But after all Paul's main emphasis was not upon the efficacy of the rite. "Set your hearts on the higher talents. And yet I will go on to show you a still higher path. Thus I may speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but if I have no love....."[3]

1 Gilbert, ibid., p. 75

2 Angus, Religious Quests, p. 198.

3 1 Cor. 12: 31-13: 1.

Paul's attitude toward the Last Supper is likewise ambiguous. He regards it in a light not far removed from the magical but he does not make the rite supreme. His chief interest is faith; then he asks for a decent observance of the rite. The partaker of the cup and bread participates in the blood and body of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16.) The food on the altar is sacrificed to daemons and "I do not want you to participate in daemons! " (1 Cor. 10:20.) Anyone who is careless or indecent at the Lord's table "eats and drinks judgment" and he goes on to suggest that some of those who are dead might not have been so if they had been more careful in this regard. (1 Cor. 11:29, 32.) Paul did not get these teachings from Jesus. Certainly his attribution in 1 Cor. 11: 24-25 to Jesus exceeds the warrant of our earliest account, Mark 14: 22-24. "The sacred meal in all the Mystery-religions was one of the principal means of securing union with the Gods."[1] This does not of course prove that Paul deliberately perverted Christianity. It does, however, indicate that he could not escape the influence of his environment. "There is no dispute. that Christianity became pronouncedly sacramentarian at an early date. The question is whether the departure began with Paul------Paul as a son of the Diaspora was thrown into intimate contact with Hellenistic mysticism, which would make him familiar with the main doctrines and practices of the Mysteries with their communion meals and raptures of initiation. And in Paul's world

1 Gilbert, <u>ibid</u>. , p. 82.

there is evidence of a deepening spiritual conception of the Mystery-rites from the magical to the sacramental, from the physical to the spiritual, which would facilitate the employment of their usages and analogies in a new religion. His native Tarsus was a center not only of Stoicism, which in his day had manifested decidedly mystical tendencies, enabling its adherents to become one with the all-pervasive Spirit, but also of Oriental mysticism. His missionary journeys led him through the great centers of the Mediterranean world where the Mystery-cults were predominant."[1]

"But all this is inconclusive, and there appears indubitable evidence that Paul must be acquitted of sacramentarianism which finds the physical cult-act the means of or necessary medium of the spiritual condition...., not one sure word can be cited from Paul"[2] "Indirectly, however, sacramentarianism traced its ancestry to Paul. His mystic significance of the sacraments easily declined into magical or semi-physical operations"[3]. "At the same time his language shows that he was not unaffected by the tide of sacramentalism which flowed copiously through the popular cults of his day; and it seems indeed probable that people who had been initiated into these cults may have taken Paul's

1 Angus, ibid., pp. 196-97.

2 Angus, ibid., p. 199.

3 Angus, ibid., p. 206.

description of Baptism as the description of a veritable sacrament, since he employed the same images with which imitation had made them familiar and since he never repudiated the principle of sacramental observances, This probability is augmented by the fact that the Church at the beginning of the following century was thoroughly sacramental. If the Church of that century had any New Testament sponsor for its sacramentalism, it was Paul." [1]

Not only in Paul, who was the earliest New Testament writer, but also in other authors we find varying degrees of Hellenistic thought. In the Synoptic Gospels we find the same, although there is less than in other writings.

Greek thought in the New Testament

In the Gospel of Mark we find no clear traces of it and if we accept the theory that Mark represents the Petrine tradition, it is natural that we should not. In the Gospels of Luke and Matthew we find strong evidences of it, naturally because the former, and very possibly the latter also, were Greeks.

The first element of this nature is the story of the supernatural birth of Jesus. This point is not mentioned by any extant sources earlier than Matthew and Luke, It was not regarded as significant enough for mention by Jesus himself even in the versions of Matthew and Luke. It seems almost certain that if Jesus were unique in

[1] Gilbert, ibid., pp. 77-78.

the matter of his birth, he would have said so. It is not necessary to Jesus' gospel, however. Mark, likewise seems not to have known of the story. If he got his material from Peter, and if Peter had known anything of the matter, it seems highly improbable that he would have remained silent. Even Paul does not make use of the story. This argument from silence, although not conclusive, has an air of authority in the direction of the non-existence of the idea in the early Church, especially the Jewish section of it. The affinities of the story are non-Jewish. The Messiah was to be descended from David, presumably through the male line. Even the genealogical tables in Matthew and Luke in defense of Jesus' Davidic descent trace the descent of Joseph not Mary from the son of Jesse."....the essential points of story of the supernatural birth of Jesus are distinctly and completely un-Jewish. We shall see....that the affinities of the story are with Greek thought. This does not mean that similar stories are found only in Greek, for it is well known that the conception of descent from a god is widespread; but it is meant that, as regards the origin of our story, we need not look beyond the intimate Greek environment".[1] There are numerous examples in Greek literature of men attaining that status of gods. The worship of kings is well-known, one of the Seleucids being known as "God".

[1] Gilbert, ibid., p. 111.

Plato is described by Speucippus as being born of a virgin and a god. Justin Martyr speaks of the story of Jesus as parallel to that of Perseus, although he maintains that in the case of the latter the story is false.

There are other points in the Synoptics which are regarded by Gilbert as Greek contributions. Certain miraculous incidents, such as: the rending of the veil of the Temple when Jesus expired (Mk. 15:38); Peter walking upon the water (Matt. 14:28-31); and taking a coin from the mouth of the fish for payment of the Temple tax (Matt. 17:24-27), this last assigning powers to Jesus denied him in Mk. 11:13 and 13:22. The constrained use of Scripture by Matthew is cited by Gilbert as Greek method. In the Book of Acts the Ascension story and the story of the speaking with tongues are assigned to non-Jewish or Greek sources.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews we have a book indubitably influenced by Greek ideas. "The Epistle to the Hebrews, the stateliest piece of composition in the New Testament, may be compared to a temple whose frame and structure are partly Christian."[1] This author speaks of Jesus as being tempted, suffering, and learning obedience (5:7, 2:18, 4:15, 2:10, 5:9). He speaks of Jesus as the heir of the universe (1:2) and the agent of creation (1:5,10.) Jesus sustains the universe with his word (1:3);

[1] Gilbert, <u>ibid</u>., p. 150.

all God's angels worship him (1:6); he was put lower than the angels to suffer death but is now crowned with glory and honor, (2:9), the high priest lifted high above the heavens for us, innocent and unstained (7:26) who has "neither father nor mother nor genealogy, neither a beginning to his days nor an end of his life, but, resembling the Son of God, continues to be priest permanently (7:3), and "Jesus Christ is always the same, yesterday, to-day, and forever" (13:8). "We must look to another quarter for the root out of which these views developed, namely, to Philo and the Greek philosophers. What they taught about the Logos furnished the writer of Hebrews the essential part of his speculative Christology."[1] For the author of Hebrews the Logos, which name he does not use, was personal.

"The Logos existed in the very beginning,
the Logos was with God,
the Logos was divine.
He was with God in the very beginning:
through him all existence came into being,
no existence came into being apart from him.
In him life lay,
and this life was the Light of men:
amid the darkenss the Light shone,
but the darkness did not master it.

. . . . . .

1 Gilbert, ibid, p. 154.

"he entered the world----
the world which existed through him----
yet the world did not recognize him;
he came to what was his own, yet his
own folk did not welcome him.

. . . . . .

"So the Logos became flesh and tarried among us;
For we have all been receiving grace after grace from his fulness; while the Law was given through Moses, grace and reality are ours through Jesus Christ." [1]

"Such then, according to the opening verses of the Fourth Gospel, was the author's conception of the Word (Logos) ---an eternally unique, divine being who stood in an intimate personal relation to God, one through whom all things were made, who was the light of mankind in general and who came in a special manner to the Jewish people."[2] This author is very close to Philo of Alexandria in his Logos doctrine. Of course in the Fourth Gospel the Logos is personal; Jesus is the incarnate Logos. The author treats Jesus throughout as the incarnate Logos and for him Jesus teaches this fact." But while this teaching (that Jesus regarded himself as the Logos) which John ascribes to Jesus is foreign to the historical tradition of his life, it is wholly in

[1] John 1: 1-15, 10-11, 14, 17.

[2] Gilbert, ibid., p. 173.

accord with the Prologue of his Gospel. Once identify Jesus with the Logos, as is done there, and all these assertions (8: 58, 17: 5, 6: 35, 8: 42, 8: 23, 8: 51, 16: 28.) connecting his earthly mission with a former heaven heavenly state appear perfectly natural and logical. What was true of Jesus, for Jesus is the Logos made flesh. The source of the teachings of Jesus cannot have been other than the source whence the Logos drew its instruction. The memory and the consciousness of Jesus must be a continuation of the mind of the Logos."[1]

We find, likewise, that the Fourth Gospel advances toward sacramentalism beyond the teachings of Paul. It does, however, have a spirituality about it which makes the physical the subordinate ally, a channel of grace. The writer does not sanction the intrinsic validity of the physical acts but his teachings are extremely susceptible of misinterpretation by the magic-saturated minds of the latter part of the first century."The evangelists healthful sacramental doctrine, the perception that the Spirit may work through material things, could not thrive save in the lofty mysticism suffused with ethical qualities, and could not but suffer declension into the magical fashion of the days when, on the cessation of the primitive spiritual manifestations,

[1] Gilbert, ibid., p. 187.

the outward rite was correspondingly highly esteemed, and when the idea from the Mysteries had taken permanent root in Christianity that no member of the brotherhood could be saved or benefit by the grace or blessings of the religion except through participation in its rituals of initiation and rebirth."[1]

Not only in the Christian literature of the first century do we find evidences of Greek thought. A full counting of specific traces of that type of thought is not so important as the recognition that Christian literature reflected to some extent the environment in which it was produced. Christianity and the Christian movement are more than a series of literary productions. They consist of ideas, attitudes and behavior of individuals. These ideas, attitudes and behavior patterns are considerably affected by the current environment of individuals. Any new type of thought, any novel idea generally undergoes some naturalizing process, being affected to some extent by characteristics of its new environment, at the same time it becomes woven into the fabric of a new culture epoch.

Interaction with Social Environment

We have already noted certain religious and intellectual contributions arising from the Graeco-Roman world which affected the developing Christian movement.

[1] Angus, Religious Quests, p. 217.

The reasons why these ideas affected the movement as they did may be classified into two categories: those arising from the fact that individuals were so intricately bound up with a way of life that the grasping of a new idea did not mean dropping all previous conceptions and likewise they are not rendered immune to current conceptions; secondly, those arising from the demand on the part of individuals for a particular type of religious thinking, meeting definite psychological needs. "The early Christians soon found themselves in even closer touch than the Jews had been with Gentile life. When they broke with the Synagogue, as they were soon forced to do, and when the membership of the community became largely Gentile, the background of their life and thinking became increasingly non-Jewish. Their cultural status in general was that of the society in which they had been reared, the activities of their every day life were determined by contemporary economic conditions, in fact their whole world of reality with all its complicated relationships was the Graeco-Roman world of the first century A.D."[1] "Each religion must aim at making men comfortable in an uncomfortable universe overwhelming to the detached individual. So much was this need felt that Christianity itself in its first contact with the outer and larger world was compelled to equip itself with cosmic apparatus and to impose cosmic functions upon

[1] Case, Evolution, p. 30.

the person of Jesus, who, indeed was better able to bear them than His mystical competitors. Christianity supplied the lack partly by a modification and intensification of Jewish apocalypticism of the two-aeon theory of history in the denouement of which Jesus played the supreme role under God, and partly by the adoption and assimilation of the current Hellenistic cosmic speculations."[1]

Christianity was profoundly influenced by the economic conditions. Because Christianity answered a need in a certain respect, it was emphasis upon this phase which gave a peculiar cast to the new product. The growing moral and spiritual bankruptcy of the Graeco-Roman culture as well as the materialistic emphasis of its economic life brought a hunger for something satisfying. "....materialism provokes its own reaction, and there developed a widespread and almost pathetic longing for a gospel of spiritual values. This longing, though naturally more articulate in the upper strata of society, was not confined to them. For the ubiquity of the Cynic is the measure of the popular opportunity, of which Christianity made full use."[2] Not always, however, did the hunger of the people, especially of the masses have

[1] Angus, Religious Quests, p. 36.

[2] Halliday, Pagan Background of Early Christianity, p. 126.

the motion of Jesus, who, indeed was better-able to comprehend their medical conditions, whereas only supplied the lack arising of a modification and intensification of certain aspectualities of the two-more theory of absence in the consequence of which which the Jesuses role under the, one merely by the addition and assimilation, a more universal distinction cosmic creations.[1]

Originality was practical, influenced by the economic conditions, because historically shaped a moral in a certain method. It was organic upon this place which gave a secondary cause to the new product. The external moral and practical in showing in the cross-fence politics as well as the materialistic principle of the economic life brought a bunger for speculative activities. "....materialism produces its own reaction. And there developed a philosophical and almost poetic longing for a period of spiritual values. This longing, though naturally more articulate in the upper circle of society, was not confined to them. For the majority of the Greeks in the centuries of the popular consciousness, or which christianity made well use,[2] not always, however, the hunger of the people, as mainly of the masses have

[1] Angus, Religion in Greece, p. 5.

[2] Halliday, Greek Religion in Early Christianity, p. 120.

the high spiritual tone, such as is sounded in the foregoing quotation. More generally it was not so much a reaction against materialism as it was a real material hunger and the search for a philosophy of hope which would give promise of filling them sometime. The note of Apocalypticism is present in a situation presenting very hard economic conditions. Asia Minor in the first century, especially among large sections of its population presented a rather dreary economic aspect. It was among these sections, generally in the cities, that Christianity made its first and most successful appeal. In the provinces of the East famine with consequent exorbitant grain prices was largely due to the monopolization of corn by the city of Rome. In an atmosphere of this sort the religion that appealed was that which answered the need, which brought a promise." Apocalypticism in the gospel had for many an economic connotation.[1] "Probably only a small minority of the members of the Pauline churches rose to even the Apostle's level in their conception of the future (cf. 2 Thess. 2: 1-12). We recollect that at the best it was only a thin veneer of the moral and spiritual which Christianity succeeded in applying to the persistent paganism of Asia Minor, and the same must have been true of the inheritance of

1 cf. Irenaeus' story of the cluster of grapes and the ears of wheat as an illustration of economic apocalyticism.

apocalyptic Messianism which Christianity brought over from Judaism."[1] Of course this idea of Messianism was present in early Christianity even before it left its Judaic cradle but as Jesus conceived himself he was not the messian of a material kingdom abounding in the fruits of an abundantly fertile soil. The apocalyptic ism present in much early Christianity was not due so much to the environing culture as it was to the economic situation. That situation produced a Greek utopianism before the time of Christianity and it was similar conditions in post-exilic Palestine which produced Jewish apocalypticism. The effect which this circumstance had upon Christianity was to heighten the supernatural element in it, to make more and more a soteriological cult of it in a material and social sense. It was not like so many of the contemporary cults, purely individualistic, the union of the soul with the Savior as it was the participation of the saved in a future kingdom. Paul struck the mystical note common to much current Mystery-religion conception, but there was likewise the social note, although not the material, in Paul.

The appeal of Christianity was not narrow. Paul was one of the intellectually competent men of his day. On the other hand he himself notes without much disappointment that "not many wise" accepted the Gospel.

[1] Dickey, ibid., p. 414.

There was an immense popular appeal, however. By the beginning of the fourth century practically all of Asia Minor had been Christianized.[1] The earliest work was done among the urban masses. The appeal to them, as was suggested, was largely due to the element of utopianism. But what appeal was made to the author of the Fourth Gospel and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews? Without doubt it was the personality of Jesus. Both are far more interested in Jesus than they are in the Kingdom of God. Not all Christians were as healthy as this in their presentation of Christianity."It is true, too, that the Christian protagonists, instead of planting themselves firmly on the divine personality of Jesus, sometimes betook themselves to the outposts of such propositions as the Virgin Birth, miracles, exorcisms, alleged fulfillment of prophecy, the axiomatic infallibility of Scripture with the inviolability of dogmata, the imminent Parousia of their Lord, the corporeity of the Resurrection, on which they exposed themselves unnecessarily to attack, and on which the emphasis altered with the passing centuries."[2]

There is a final phase of life in which the Christians occupied a reciprocal position, their relations with the state,with organized society, were of a negative character. The idea of citizenship did not weigh heavily

[1] Harnack, Mission and Expansion, v. II, pp. 182 f.

[2] Angus, Mystery-Religions and Christianity, p. 268.

with most Christians. Large numbers of them were never, even in the days of Commodus, eligible for citizenship. Paul's citizenship seems to have been an exception especially in early times. Their other-worldliness caused them to ignore the kingdoms of this world. On the other hand the slight prospect of affecting the kingdoms of this world had a tendency to drive one toward other-worldliness. At the same time Christians were intolerant of other religious organizations and defied the state in the matter of observance of the Imperial-cult. The non-participation of most Christians in the armed forces of the empire and the aloofness of many from many social pastimes brought condemnation upon them from contemporary writers.[1] To what degree the excesses of Graeco-Roman life led to asceticism in the Christian movement, and to what extent it was due to independent sources implicit in its own teaching, it is impossible to say. Moral grossness produces a reaction. It produced a reaction in many quarters of its own society. "Ascetisism was a postulate for practically every religion of the period which made salvation consist in deliverance from the world rather than in the deliverance of the world from itself by the realization of the Divine Spirit in it." [2] There are certain phases of Jesus' teachings which may be construed to advocate asceticism. The

[1] Tacitus speaks of them as "haters of men" in connection with his story of the burning of Rome in 63 A.D. in which he charges Nero with choosing the Christians as scapegoats for his own crime.

[2] Angus, Religious Quests, p. 22

average Christian of the first century probably did not go to the lengths advocated by Tertullian and Tatian or even by Paul.

By its contact with Graeco-Roman culture the religion of Jesus becomes colored by that environment. This contact comes after the death of Jesus and he begins to assume proportions in the thinking of his disciples not altogether consonant with his own thought of himself and his work. The transition from this Judaic "sect" to Hellenistic Christianity was in a sense inevitable. It was perfectly natural and it is perfectly comprehensible how it occurred. At the same time, one cannot deny that the transition was in effect a real alteration of the character of Christianity. Many writers[1] argue that the change was necessary to the life of Christianity. It may have been necessary that the Christian movement become naturalized before it should be acceptable to the Graeco-Roman world, but I do not believe that Jesus' message needed adaptation, nay more almost complete subversion before it became comprehensible and accepted by the Hellenistic world. It may have become more pallatable but it was not more truly the Gospel of Jesus. "When the Jesus of the Gospel was transformed into the Alexandrian Christ, what was achieved was not the gathering of the Gentile

[1] Pfleiderer, Rose, Scott, Gardner, Harnack.

world into the Kingdom of Heaven, not an acceptance by that world into the Kingdom of Jesus, but an overthrow of the very basis of that religion."[1]

The Graeco-Roman world presented a particular type of culture. A religious movement taking its inspiration from a Jewish genius who was martyred for his devotion to the moral law came into contact with that culture. The movement itself survived the contact but the influence of the environing culture upon the basic idea was profound. The culture needed a movement of this type to redeem it, but the movement became redemptive in the special sense of the needs of that society after contact with the society.

Summary and Conclusion

This culture was characterized by political universality replacing a city-state or polis localism. The polis gave the individual greater opportunity for satisfying his political ego either immediately or vicariously but economic individualism was more characteristic of the universal state. At the same time economic ownership was becoming centralized and a large mass of people was left with little outlet for egoistic satisfaction. The intellectual life was characterized by a notable vigor but this was declining possibly. Authority in thought life was succeeding rational independence.

[1] Gilbert, ibid., pp. 99-100.

Soteriological cults offered authoritative salvation but their lack of definite historicity made them inferior to Christianity. Recreational and moral life were characterized on the one hand by vulgarity and obscenity, groosly materialistic and sensual; on the other hand there was a healthy protest arising from both non-Christian and Christian sources.

This milieu needed something like the Christian movement. The Christian movement did not save Graeco-Roman culture in the sense that it inspired it to greater triumphs but it redeemed some of its grossness and hideousness. The barbarian invasions without the restraint of the Church might have utterly destroyed that culture instead of temporarily eclipsing it.

The Christian movement began as a Judaic religious revival inspired by the genius of Jesus. His Messianic language was seized by the disciples and made the basis of their appeal to their fellow Jews. Some of these Jews who believed were members of the Diaspora and they took the idea home with them. There began the process of its Hellenization. The greatest figure in the work of spreading the gospel among the Jews of the Diaspora and then among the Gentiles was Saul of Tarsus. His active mind translated in concrete terms the Judaic Jesus-cult into Greek and it became Hellenistic Christianity. He brought to the oppressed Jews news of the Kingdom of God, a kingdom in which <u>all</u> life is carried on on a

basis of complete love to God and complete love to all men, enemies especially. Jesus' life exemplified his teaching and his death at the instigation of patriots was consistent with his teachings of the necessity of a suffering love.... Paul's translation altered somewhat the character of Jesus' ideas. His emphasis was upon Jesus himself rather than upon his ideas. He selected from Jesus' work one aspect, the possibility of contact with God and his mystical nature finds in the personality of Jesus the avenue of approach to God. He presented this to a Greek world containing religions not radically different in outline from the idea he held. Presentation to a conditioned society in suggestive terms led to a closer adaptation along general Mystery outlines.

The Christian movement inspired most of its communicants of the first century to noble and sacrifical lives. At the same time the tendency of some to take selfish advantage of their connections was present. Paul's relations to the Corinthian Church were not of the pleasantest, and it was not all Paul's fault. The Christian movement of to-day must get back to Jesus' spirit. The Kingdom of God as a living reality based on love to God and to man will come only by loyalty to the demands of universal moral law as apprehended and exemplified most successfully by Jesus. Only by

acquiescence in Jesus' great demands will the Kingdom of God come. Paul's Christology was Hellenistic, differing from Jesus' thought of himself; his asceticism was unhealthy in its tendency, but his vital spirit and devotion to love are eternally valid. The genius of Christianity in its ability to survive adaptations and to continue to inspire. It speaks to each age in the language of that age, not the language of Jesus; it is translated. All translations are in a way inaccurate interpretations. Accuracy comes through experience. Understanding Jesus comes through the experience of sacrifice for one's fellowmen, and communion with God.

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